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USDA ANNOUNCES DRAFT NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2003—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today released a draft National Animal Agriculture Conservation Framework to help address the conservation challenges and opportunities of animal agriculture.

"This framework emphasizes the importance of a public-private partnership to promote environmental stewardship in animal agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. "USDA is committed to working with all interested parties to develop and implement approaches to help the nation's livestock and poultry producers meet today's needs."

Earlier this year, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationists worked with interested partners through their State Technical Committees to develop state frameworks to address the conservation challenges facing animal agriculture over the next 10 to 15 years. The national framework is built on the state efforts and presents a vision for voluntary, proactive ways to foster environmentally sound and economically viable livestock and poultry production. It calls for collaboration among federal, tribal, state and local governments; producers; the public; and the private sector to commit the skills and resources needed to support environmental stewardship in animal agriculture.

The draft national framework has four objectives:

- Help producers meet environmental regulatory requirements.
- Assist in implementing flexible, results-based multimedia solutions.
- Promote innovation and market-based opportunities.
- Share knowledge and increase accountability.

The 2002 Farm Bill made clear that producers should receive assistance to improve their operations' environmental performance; address federal, tribal, state and local environmental regulations; and maintain economically viable operations. Livestock and poultry returns are a major contributor to revenues in the nation's agricultural sector. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, animal agriculture generates about \$100 billion per year, accounting for more than half the total agricultural receipts for the last three years.

Strategies included in the framework include focusing public conservation assistance on locally identified priorities; strengthening current markets and fostering development of new ones and developing and verifying alternative technologies and tools.

The federal investment in conservation research, information and education, and technical and financial assistance is leveraged through the activities of state agencies, universities and colleges, commodity and industry groups, and private landowners and managers.
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Comments on the draft National Animal Agriculture Conservation Framework should be submitted by Oct. 27, 2003, to Tom Christensen, USDA-NRCS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Mail Stop 5473, Beltsville MD 20705. For additional information, contact Angel Figueroa, USDA-NRCS Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs Division, phone 301-504-2225 or e-mail angel.figueroa@usda.gov. The document is on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/afo>.

Additional information on the 2002 Farm Bill can be found at www.usda.gov/farmbill.

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